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## Montana legislator pushes for horse slaughterhouse

By The Associated Press

HELENA - A state legislator says the country needs a horse slaughterhouse and that Montana would be a good place for one.

Republican Rep. Ed Butcher's bill declares the state open for that type of business and attempts to reassure potential investors perhaps skittish following recent closure of the country's last equine slaughterhouse. Cavel International Inc. shut down its DeKalb, Ill., operation after the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in 2007 upheld an Illinois law prohibiting slaughter of horses for human consumption.

The country needs a slaughterhouse as cases of horse abandonment and cruelty escalate amid economic upheaval that has some owners of the animals unable to care for them, unable to find new homes for horses and looking for ways to dispose of them humanely and affordably, said Butcher, a horse owner from the central Montana farm community of Winifred.

"Horses are being kicked out on the roads, left on the land," he said Tuesday in a telephone interview.

A bill being considered in North Dakota would designate money to study the possible opening of a horse slaughterhouse in that state. In Wyoming, the House gave preliminary approval to a measure requesting that Congress not interfere with shipment and slaughter of unwanted horses. A bill pending in Congress would prohibit transporting across U.S. borders horses that would be killed for meat, effectively removing Canada and Mexico as slaughter destinations.

Butcher's House Bill 418, scheduled for a hearing Thursday before the House Agriculture Committee, attempts to limit what a state court could do to stop or delay construction of a horse slaughterhouse.

Selling horses for slaughter was an option when the country had facilities to take them, Butcher said, but now people are left with the cost of euthanasia plus disposal fees that can run into hundreds of dollars - if they don't decide to abandon the animals.

Horse slaughter "would be an incredible industry for Montana," generating jobs not just in the killings but also in areas such as preparation of meat for sale in Europe and packaging of dog food, he said.

The Humane Society of the United States finds Butcher's proposal bad for Montana as well as for horses.

A slaughterhouse killing what are not generally regarded as food animals presents a difficult image problem, said Nancy Perry, the organization's vice president for government affairs. And claims of humane treatment don't stand up, Perry said from Washington, D.C.

"Horses are particularly ill-suited for being put through a process like this," she said.

They commonly fight and become injured during long transport to slaughterhouses, Perry said. Once they arrive, she said, the turmoil continues because horses "react to the fight-or-flight response."

"They will try to escape a kill box" and the procedure for killing them can be disrupted, she said.

Butcher said slaughtering domestically makes more sense than sending U.S. horses to Canada or Mexico, and the work can be done swiftly, without pain to the animal.

"It's boom!" he said. "The horse is deceased."

While "activists all warm and fuzzy" may oppose using a horse for meat, people who find slaughter a practical alternative should have the option, Butcher said.

"Not every horse is Trigger," he said, referring to cowboy movie actor Roy Rogers' horse. "There's a lot of these horses whose working days are done."

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## (93) Comments as of: 10:00am – February 12, 2009

### **Obamageddon 1 day ago**

This bill and a slaughter facility are a necessary part of responsible horse ownership. Horses are animals and they are a good source of protein both for humans and pets. Support this bill!

### **ya sure 1 day ago**

I had a 25+ year old horse that should have been sent to market several years ago if there was one; instead he just hung around sickly with few teeth and finally died in the cold weather this winter. He could have been turned into quality dog food and benefited me and for that matter all horses' value. Hope this works. Having no outlet for horse flesh has really hurt them

### **fidlr 1 day ago**

This is one Butcher idea that makes a lot of sense. There was interest in horse meat during the shortages of WWII. If our current economy doesn't get jump started soon there may be demand for horse meat consumption in the U.S. again. The meat is very healthy as it is quite lean and an excellent source of protein. If sold for human consumption it would have to be in a special market where beef and pork are not sold.

### **roadkill 1 day ago**

As long as it can be done humanely...I think its a great idea. Support the bill !

### **sunrise 1 day ago**

it's refreshing to finally hear of a politician introduce a bill that makes sense. It would be great if a facility could become operational. The Harmful Society actions have been very harmful to horses, and they shouldn't dictate what people can or can't do with their private property.

### **timetothintheherd 1 day ago**

This bill is deperately needed to straighten out the mess our enlightened ones bestowed on us! Unfortunately, it probably won't pass becouse emotionalism will be common sense and reality everytime!

**meanwhile, back at the ... 1 day ago**

The jobs will be nice, and something definitely needs to happen. And NOW is darn sure the time. Here is a place to inject stimulus \$\$ that would actually DO something. And I know this goes against the grain of all things gov't., but we could actually kill 2 birds with one stone here. An economy boost, & take care of a humane problem that is spiralling out of control. The legislation that put us in this situation was enacted 100% emotion, 0% common sense (surprise!). I try not to think too much about killing my horses, brings tears to my eyes. But the truth is, at some point it has to happen. Some stay healthy enough to get old & die peacefully in retirement. Others go painfully lame with arthritis, or the wear & tear of years of service. Others break down in their prime, long before I'm ready to see them go. Some just never are worth are dang. But they all have to be taken care of in the best way possible. And when it's time, it's time. And there are 1000's of horses who are being let go WAY past time. Let's stop letting other folks, many (but not all) of whom are not horse owners, tell us how to deal with our responsibilities as stewards. These folks had a choice to be a part of the solution or a part of the problem. Now let's be part of the solution.

**LDW 1 day ago**

Don't worry about this one passing. First we have too many horse lovers without a realistic look on what to do with their old ponies after they are beyond any usefulness. They know they can't bury an animal of that size when they finally die of old age or neglect. 2nd with our wonderful Governor we have no worries about business of any type actually taking and creating a foothold in this state. Good luck with the slaughter house though. North America must have some way of processing all of these unwanted animals.

**Whipsaw 1 day ago**

So let your old foundered horse stand out there in the pasture dying from heart worms and bad teeth. But you get to feel so much better about YOURSELF because he's out there in the freezing weather happily "resting" until he dies a "natural" death. After all he worked so hard for you and he "deserves" to pass-away naturally instead of being KILLED either by a vets injection or at a horse slaughter house. That is the thinking of most horse owners. Just ignore the horse, it'll die out there and then we'll drag it down in the coulee to the cow bone pile. But folks, in the mean time the animal is in horrible pain. I think alot of folks had way to much Walt Disney while growing up. Goofy and Mickey are not real animals, but you know that, right? So don't impose human feelings and thinking on them. Their great just the way they are. Look up the word Anthropomorphic. A horse slaughter facility is a great idea. There was one in Redmond, OR until the mid-80's and it employed over 50 people and the french and belgians ate tons of steak. I mean these liberal animal activists love the french don't they? Well then send them some high quality meat. Donald Duck?....Geez!

**Nosalestax 1 day ago**

I see nothing but good common horse here. Support this bill.

**bruster 1 day ago**

get her done

**ljl 1 day ago**

Sounds like we have someone that has some real brains, starting a slaughter house, he is in the real world, the animals lovers, should see if he would give them some of his brains, have a good day.

**bigtrailsMT 1 day ago**

Natural death. Give me a break. Starving to death because the animal doesn't have teeth or appetite is a horrendously cruel death. It is slow and painful and if you have ever looked at a starving horse with bones sticking out and no meat left, you can be damn well assured that the humane thing to do is put it down. The cost is ridiculous to euthanize which is just a fuzzy word for kill, and is less disgusting than using the animal for slaughter. Most of the world's diet consists of eating horse meat. It is only in the US that the animal rights bozos have created this cruel culture. It disgusts me to hear people decry this bill in the name of humanity. The humane society is out of touch with the reality of letting an animal die of disease and freezing cold, and because many people don't have the means to care for them. The ONLY humane treatment for old or unwanted horses or even young untrained unwanted horses is to put them to good use at slaughter. I raise registered horses but I also eat horse meat. It's better than Buffalo and it's grass fed. What more could you ask for in a meat. It's good and good for you. Tell the humane society and the rest of the la la land animal rights folks to get a real job. Those of us with old horses don't have the means to tend to sick, old, unwanted horses. Especially in this economy. How many of the thousands of horses due for slaughter is the Humane Society willing to take to their facilities and find a good home for. Yeah right, like that will ever happen. Give me a break.

**jaymes 1 day ago**

I'm sure this will bring out the PETA people in french maid costumes pitching turkfu on the capitol steps

**ranch girl 1 day ago**

Please support this bill. Owners need to be able to humanly get rid of old or crippled horses. A horse was made to work not stand around and eventually die because they can't eat or drink or walk. You have all seen them along the roads.

**Minnette 1 day ago**

I think the bill should be passed. Horses are "livestock" and they are "property"-- taxed, branded, and brand inspected. This bill could be very beneficial to our economy and revive the struggling horse market.

**Whipsaw 22 hours ago**

Amasedone, what La-La land do you sail around in? I visited the horse slaughter house in Redmond, OR while it was in operation and those horses were ALL in very poor shape when brought in. Going down to the livestock auction in Billings when they have a horse sale. Do you think those horses are destined for a 4-H project? Keep dreaming your NICE little dreams and feeding your FEEL GOOD fantasies but the truth is that most of those horses are bid on and then transported to a differant state and SLAUGHTERED for human consumption. Go picket the auction yard. The animals I saw at the "processing facility" (feel better?) were all well fed and it took only 12 minutes from the kill chute to the cooler. I watched the employee kill (or if you'd feel better, "Say Goodbye To")50 horses as I watched. It was instant, and humane. Depending on your definition of humane.

**Dave Skinner 20 hours ago**

Gotta give Ed credit for sticking to his guns on this one. Let's see if the rest of the Legislature has a spine. Slaughter is a necessary option, the most cost-effective AND, when you get down to it, humane.

**cnhinwy 20 hours ago**

Having owned horses all of my life and having been put in the position of euthanizing some of them myself I am 100% in support of slaughter facilities in every state to deal with unwanted, injured, sick, or just plain too old horses. You might as well throw in Llamas, alpacas and every other livestock animal raised in the US while you're at it. These facilities are necessary to keep the horse industry healthy. I'm also sure the children starving in places like Darfur and Zimbabwe wouldn't care what kind of meat you fed them as long as you fed them. Why waste what can be so useful?

**Are you human? 13 hours ago**

Horses are livestock, yet our laws treat them like they are poodles. My goodness. Just because most Americans do not have a history of eating horse meat does not mean we ban the industry. If we do not allow horse slaughter, why not ban cattle, pig, and sheep? With sheep we are even cutting up the young ones because they are more tender. And we have a problem with horse slaughter? My goodness these PETA-esque wackos are out of control. Good work Rep Butcher and good luck getting this through the legislature.

**montanavoter 12 hours ago**

We all need to leave a message for all members of the House Agriculture Committee urging them to vote for HB418. It is so much more humane for horses to have a place to go when they are injured or old and suffering. It is NOT humane to have horses you don't feed or take care of. All horses needs dental work so they can eat, they need their feet trimmed so they don't suffer from pain when they move, they need to be wormed so they can utilize their feed. They need feed and water every single day, not just when their owners can afford to feed them. People pushing against horse slaughter are hurting all horses. They are giving horses "no value" and people do not take care of an animal with no value. Drive through the country side or the outskirts of cities and see the horses penned up in small areas waiting for someone to feed and water them. Now that is not humane. Thank You Ed Butcher for standing up for the rights of all horses and their owners.

**Teve Torbes 10 hours ago**

I'm surprised but encouraged at all the positive comments on this idea. I figured this blog would be bleeding red with poor horsey stories. It seems like good plan to me.

**sam 3 hours ago**

A horse slaughter house is a necessary part of ranching. While the bleeding hearts would rather see old or crippled horses live out their lives, ranching is a business and a useless horse is just a drain on the business. Horses are made to work and be useful. When they're not, it's time to go to the big pasture in the sky. Sadly, most that oppose a horse slaughter house are pro abortion. They'd terminate a precious human life at the drop of a hat, but keep a crippled suffering old horse around past it's usefulness. It's a strange world isn't it?